THE

SALEM MERCURY:

Political, Commercial, and Moral.

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TO THE PUBLICK.

THE Publishers of the SALEM MERCURY, actuated by a principle of decency, rather than to rush precipitately into their presence, think it by no means improper, while stopping upon the threshold of their undertaking, to bespeak the patronage and indulgence of the Publick—earnestly hoping that their humble attempts to please and entertain will live and increase beneath the genial influence of their candour.

THE Editors, thoroughly aware of the difficulties with which they must struggle in establishing a new paper at the present period, rely for success on the nature of their plan, and a strict adherence to their engagements. They flatter themselves that the Publick will encourage a paper calculated and designed to convey instruction and information to *every* class of readers, without disgusting *any*—to substitute liberal discussion for party invective, and modest essays for indelicate lucubrations;—a paper, comprehensive in its plan—embracing every department, political, commercial and moral;—a paper, neutral in its politicks—neither prostituted to one set of men, nor devoted to another—the friend or the enemy of both or either, when they pursue the publick good, or sacrifice it to their private ends;—a paper, the object of which is rather to sooth and heal, than irritate, the publick wounds, made by domestick dissensions, so fatal to the general prosperity of the commonwealth.

The dark complexion of publick concerns, and the consequent difficulties of the times, urge the Publishers to espouse the principles of frugality and economy, (so salutary to their country at the present crisis) which prevents their obtaining printing apparatus adequate to their wishes; no favourable opportunity, however, will be neglected to render them more complete.

SUBSCRIBERS in town shall be carefully and regularly served with the Mercury, every Saturday morning, at nine shillings per annum; those living in the country, supplied, with the strictest punctuality, by the earliest conveyances.—Every favour from correspondents—all orders in the typographical line, gratefully acknowledged and honourably attended to. Advertisements, received with gratitude, and conspicuously exhibited, on moderate terms.

As it has ever been usual in similar cases to receive an advance of six months, to enable the undertakers, in the morning of their business, to answer the calls of necessity, (never louder or more urgent than at present) we should be unhappy to violate a custom so laudable, so irresistible—one, wherein our friends and patrons, we doubt not, will readily acquiesce.

THE assistance and effusions of the ingenious and judicious—masculine observations, and delicate reflections—are respectfully solicited from either sex, to enrich the present publication, and render it

With age respectful, prudent with the wise,
Yet still consistent, and without disguise;
Mild, with the gentle; with the sprightly, gay;
And, with the cautious, as reserv'd as they.

EVERY effort and exertion, which gratitude and honour can inspire, will be cheerfully embraced, to merit and secure the generous approbation of the Publick, by their devoted, humble servants,

JOHN DABNEY,
THOMAS C. CUSHING.

Printing-Office, Salem,
October 14, 1786.

The POLITICIAN.

SPIRIT *of* UNION.

WHEN the spirit of union is checked, and divisions arise, from the variety and freedom of opinion only, or from the contested rights and privileges of the different ranks or orders of a state, or from the detached and selfish views of individuals, a republick is then in its strength, and gathers warmth and fire from those collisions. Such was the state of ancient Rome, in the simpler and more disinterested periods of that republick. But when principle is weakened, and manners are lost, and factions run high, from selfish ambition, revenge, or avarice, a republick is then on the very eve of destruction; and such was the state of Rome in the times of Marius and Sylla, Pompey and Cæsar, Anthony and Augustus. Therefore, ere we can determine, whether the factions which divide a free country be salutary or dangerous, it is necessary to know what is their foundation, and their objects. If they arise from freedom of opinion, and aim at the publick welfare, they are salutary: if their source be selfish interest, of what kind soever, they are then dangerous and destructive. When factions arise from the excess of military spirit, and ambition of dominion, they increase the national capacity, and spirit of defence: on the contrary, when factions arise from selfish effeminacy, the national capacity, and spirit of defence, will certainly be weakened and destroyed.

COMMERCE.

COMMERCE derived its origin from our wants, real or imaginary. Little satisfies nature; but the cravings of luxury and ambition are almost numberless; so that the rich employ the industrious, to supply the demands of splendour and magnificence. Convenience introduced trade; and its progress has been principally owing to the increase of mankind, who have found a proportionable extension of commerce necessary for their support.

Every nation, which carries on a great trade, must be proportionably populous and opulent. The conveniencies and comforts of life are the most attractive objects which can possibly engage the attention of mankind. Could we suppose a trading people to inhabit a country, whose neighbours did not apply themselves to commerce, what would be the consequence? The mercantile nation, like a mighty magnet, would draw the foreigners to it, because its commerce would employ and pay them; and consequently its inhabitants would be augmented and enriched from the ruin of its neighbours. In a word—as the importance of trade is so great, its principles can never be too much attended to by a trading people.

The MORALIST.

On HAPPINESS.

HAPPINESS, or, in other words, the true felicity of life, does not consist in a large share of the gifts of fortune, as many blindly suggest—far from it; no opinion can be more preposterous, than to think that the happiness of a rational creature depends on things so precarious, and subject to such vicissitudes. It is equally as preposterous to imagine that happiness consists in sensuality; for all events of sensuality, which are often, though erroneously, called pleasure, carry with them their respective and peculiar evils. But real happiness consists in our rightly understanding our moral duties, and the obligations we owe our fellow-creatures; and when we have acquired this true knowledge, to put it in practice. And surely, if instead of blind passion, we follow that heaven-illumined lamp, Reason, as our guide, she would soon lead us to understand, and practise, the duties on which our real felicity depends.

The first object she will conduct us to, after we have submitted ourselves to her direction, is wisdom, that reasoning faculty that discriminates between good and evil, and points out what should be chosen, and what rejected: it consists of knowledge and judgment conducted by prudence and discretion: it is a judgment not founded on the common opinion of things, but on their real, their intrinsick value; it is an examination of all circumstances, both of time and place; for, with regard to time, it sees where it began, what it now is, and how long it will continue; and with respect to place, no bounds can confine it, being infinite in extent, as it soars on the wings of contemplation, through the whole creation; it surrounds the earth, penetrates the depths of the sea, wings its flights through the boundless tracks of ether, and visits even the very heavens themselves. It is our truest director in all moral and social duties; in fine, it constitutes the perfection of humanity, raised to the most elevated pitch nature is capable of attaining.

To the good People of Massachusetts.

——AND really a good sort of people ye are, when ye are pleased. The task is not difficult to bring ye into good-humour, neither; but I defy all the artists upon earth to keep you so.

Ye love to find fault—nay, to make faults; and, if you cannot quarrel with your neighbours, you will fall out with yourselves; like the greyhound, who used to grow angry at his own tail.'

You may say, that I am guilty of injustice; and that ye are affable, humane, friendly, charitable, social, sweet-tempered, self-denying beings. If every person was to draw his own picture, the pen-and-ink portrait would appear so; but I, who have looked upon life for above twenty years, as an unconcerned spectator of all the fantasticalness with which mankind have fatigued themselves—to me ye appear selfish, stubborn, querulous, conceited, discontented existences—and ever enjoy more than ye deserve—yet are daily wishing for more enjoyments, and do less to deserve them.

Epictetus says, mankind are dissatisfied; Seneca says, they are discontented: and this is what, both before and since Seneca, every person has been saying, who could say any thing.

With your leave, good people, I will present you with a character; as it is common for those who suppose themselves to be artists, to exhibit specimens of their performances, I offer this, with submission; and tell me, if you please, how you like it.—'Tis a sketch of a farmer.

In the harvest season, that particular month of Providence's bounty, when all the animal creation appears cheerfully industrious, and we may even fancy approaching winter to bear a smile on his weather-worn wrinkles, when he views the store that is gathering in to comfort him, while he visits us—yet, even then, congratulate the farmer on the noble prospect of his well-covered acres, he will shake his head, and, between a sigh and a grunt, answer you with—'Ah! but the straw is short!'

If the straw is long, then—there is no substance in the grain.

If there is but an indifferent crop, he laments that it will not pay the expense of housing and thrashing.

If a plentiful crop, then he grumbles—corn will be so cheap, it will not be worth carrying to market.

The reader, who happens not to be a farmer, will wonder how this person can be so discontented. Yet it is an even bet, that those who seem to be amazed at such grumblers, are as dissatisfied themselves: the symptoms of the distemper may be different, but the disease is the same in almost all.

Half the cure is supposed to be performed, when the physician knows the patient's disorder. Indeed, my good people, neighbours, and choice spirits, I do know, *bona fide*, that ye are disordered, and know what your disorder is—nay, would prescribe for you, but imagine my medicines will be thrown away.

Suppose I order you a few grains of self-knowledge, half a drachm of patience, and a scruple of self-denial, mixed up with a tea-spoonful of the syrup of humanity—will any of you take such an electuary? Ye might taste it, indeed, for the novelty's sake; but I will bet a handful of integrity, against all court ceremonies, that ye spit it out again.

Folly has thrown your heads into hystericks; and I will lay opinion against common sense (which are the greatest odds that can be offered) not one man in many dozens knows what is the matter with himself.

Last week I called on an old acquaintance: his lady told me, her spouse was disturbed and disordered at something—she could not tell what; and that she was happy at my calling, because she hoped I would get him into spirits again.

I went to him into his study: there he sat, discontented as an undone gamester. I took him by the hand, and inquired if he was ill. He replied, that, thank God, he enjoyed as good a state of health as any man in the world. I desired to know if his affairs were any way complicated, which might make him uneasy. His reply was—'Sir, I do not owe any person a shilling; and my income greatly exceeds my out-sets.'——'I hope, sir, no words have happened betwixt your lady and you?'—'There is not a better woman breathing, sir; and we live in continued harmony.'——'How does your daughter, sir?'—'Married, sir, as happily as I am.'——'Your son at college?'—'My son, sir, contributes to my happiness; I hear every body praise him.'—'What, then, sir, can you be uneasy about?'—'See, there, sir,' my friend replied, raising his voice at the same time, and pulling some printed papers out of his pocket—'there, sir! read there!—there is the Centinel, and the Gazette, and the Ledger, and the Herald, and the Chronicle—who can enjoy himself, when he reads such terrible accounts as they give us, not only of the government, but also of the people? Mercy upon us! but we are a bought-and-sold nation!'

With some difficulty I persuaded him to come into company again, and once more be himself, and leave the study of politicks to those who love to be imposed on.

I told him—and what I said unto him I say unto all—that all a man of sense